people praise my writing, considering my crooked fingers & how ill I have been

My dear Maria Rome 6th Jan. 1870

As I forgot to answer your kind enquiries about my good servant I make it the occasion of another letter which I know will please you

She is nearly well after 50 days of tight bandages of her arm, but 'tis a real cure & so I shall soon again have all her excellent services meanwhile her niece under her direction does all very well - still I am obliged to have aid in dressing for to do it myself is great fatigue & pain

It will amuse you to know my agreement with this servant - I give every day 4.2 for her herself & me to provide dinner, lunch & breakfast for two & Nina she does really well, so you see I have no trouble about accounts & she puts by something for herself - I pay her £10 a year

Charles wrote me a sad bad account of poor dear Tom, that he could not even move a finger, yet there was hope of his rallying, dear fellow how glad I am that he has got so many

kind creatures about him beginning with Emma who is an Angel like our dear mother— I live in hopes & pray for so dear a brother, who I have always so tenderly loved & admired & of whom I feel a pride as a real example of a good man

We have had rain for 5 weeks so that I ought to suffer but I thank God I am still well able to perform all my duties, now this fine

I am in a mess with the English ladies for the Cardinal Vicar won't allow a ball on the Epiphany night nor the Friday & Saturday so I seem shilly shally as I have not been able to bully this Eminence, indeed these festivals should be kept up — I am preparing my two large pictures for the Pope's exhibition in February & hope to make a flare up here altho' I was snubbed in London

I hope Mrs will find you as comfortable as may be with the affliction of dear Tom — Charley gave me a good account of my Claudia, who I fear she is always sinking, how sad!! but such is our mortal state — My "marcian water" is put off till April as they are unable to cut thro two granite mountains & so now come round them, no interest paid!! loving Joe

I regret much that I cannot possibly be at the wedding, for I am too weak for such a journey & might sink under it, whilst I am quiet I go on well but any thing extraordinary floors me

My pictures make a great figure in the Popes exhibition & is everywhere said that the Holiness must give me the great prize but I still doubt it as I am a protestant, but tis enough that I make the chief figure in painting

At last we have fine weather & a little warmth but the winter seems never to finish, at all events there will be a month less of the great heat

I am still very happy in my position here for it really suites me & I excell in it with all its difficulties & I hope I shall be allowed to remain as long as I can hold a pen & know how to kick about me — my two secretaries are excellent young men & devoted to me — the climate suites me — I shall hope to hear good news of poor Tom & that he beats me in his recovery as he is so much younger than I am, yet I hope he may be equally tough — My dear Claudia is still very drooping & Mr Newton insists on the wedding at his house on her account — my love to all

your loving Joe